

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A thermal separating process between at least one gaseous and at least one liquid stream, of which at least one comprises (meth)acrylic monomers, in a separating column containing separating internals, at least some of the separating internals being a sequence of sieve trays, wherein the improvement comprises:

~~adjusting~~ feeding the streams so that at least some of the sieve trays are operated above an entrainment fraction of 10% by weight.

Claim 2 (Previously Presented): A thermal separating process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the separating internals contained in the separating column are exclusively mass transfer trays at least some of which being a sequence of sieve trays.

Claim 3 (Currently Amended): A thermal separating process as claimed in claim 1 or 2, wherein the separating internals contained in the separating column are, from bottom to top, a sequence of dual-flow trickle sieve trays, hydraulically sealed crossflow trays and valve trays.

Claim 4 (Previously Presented): A thermal separating process as claimed in claim 1 or 2, wherein the separating internals contained in the separating column are exclusively trickle sieve trays.

Claim 5 (Previously Presented): A thermal separating process as claimed in claims 1 or 2, which is a process for fractional condensation, for rectification or for absorption.

Claim 6 (Previously Presented): A thermal separating process as claimed in claims 1 or 2, wherein at least some of the sieve trays are operated at an entrainment fraction of from 11 to 70% by weight.

Claim 7 (Previously Presented): A thermal separating process as claimed in claims 1 or 2, wherein at least some of the sieve trays are operated at an entrainment fraction of from 11 to 30% by weight.

Claim 8 (Previously Presented): A thermal separating process as claimed in claims 1 or 2, wherein all of the sieve trays are operated at an entrainment fraction of from 11 to 70% by weight.

Claim 9 (Previously Presented): A thermal separating process as claimed in claims 1 or 2, wherein all of the sieve trays are operated at an entrainment fraction of from 11 to 30% by weight.

Claim 10 (Currently Amended): A thermal separating process as claimed in claims 1 or 2, wherein the at least one liquid stream comprises polymerization inhibitors.

Claim 11 (Currently Amended): A thermal separating process as claimed in claims 1 or 2, ~~which is a process for fractionally condensing the product gas mixture~~ wherein the at least one gaseous stream is the product gas mixture of a catalytic gas phase oxidation of C3 precursor compounds to acrylic acid for preparing acrylic acid.

DISCUSSION OF THE AMENDMENT

Claims 1-11 are active in the present application. The claims have been amended for matters of form and clarity.

Applicants submit that because the amendment to the claims address only those issues discussed by the Office in the Office Action of March 25, 2006, that no new issues are raised. Therefore, the amended claims should be entered and given full consideration.

No new matter is added.